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TOMPKINS COUNTY WATER RESOURCES COUNCIL

**June 18, 2012
Meeting Minutes**

Voting Members Present (12): Sharon Anderson, Liz Cameron, Bill George, Barry Goodrich, Roxy Johnston, Darby Kiley, Lynn Leopold, Frank Proto, Elaine Quaroni, Marjory Rinaldo-Lee, Craig Schutt, Mary Shelley

Voting Members Excused (6): Ed Bugliosi, Joan Jurkowich, Dan Karig, Rick Manning, Gregg McConnell, Jim McGarry

Voting Members Absent (1): Fay Benson

Non-Voting Members Present (3): John Andersson, Scott Carpenter, Todd Miller

Guest Present: Jon Negley, Amy Risen

Staff Present: Kathy Wilsea

Chairman Frank Proto called the meeting to order at 4:22 PM

Agenda Review and Approval of Minutes – A draft response to a Guest Viewpoint article in the Ithaca Journal will be discussed under Executive Committee. Guest Amy Risen asked to talk about the proposed waste transfer station in Newfield, and that was added under Other Business. Draft minutes were moved by Darby Kiley, seconded by Lynn Leopold and amended in line 95 to read “DEC is not discussing State money, which is separate from the large \$800,000 grant that is funded **but not released.**” Final minutes are available on the WRC website: <http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/committees/WRC/WRCagendaminutes.htm>. New associate member Scott Carpenter was introduced. He is a State Emergency Management Office employee, involved with storm damage assessment and reimbursement.

2011 Storm Damage Report – Jon Nagley was present from Soil & Water Conservation District. Regionally, there was a lot of damage from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. T S Lee dumped over 6” of rain from September 6-8, 2011, with most of the Tompkins County damage in the towns of Caroline, Danby and Newfield. FEMA declared a state of emergency after T S Lee, which released some funding. Jon shared a slide show of debris and erosion. It is difficult to get FEMA money unless the damage is a public assistance issue, such as road or gas line. FEMA only allows restoration to the original condition. But Jon pointed out these sites failed because they were inadequate before the storm, so applications were also done for mitigation funds for some of the sites.

Goals are to direct flow velocities away from vulnerable areas by using structures, and achieving flexible and strong rooted vegetation along the streambanks. Many agencies – Tompkins County Planning, SWCD, municipal highway departments, USGS, NRCR, US Fish & Wildlife Service, municipalities, Community Science Institute, Trout Unlimited, Finger Lakes Land Trust, Cornell, Ithaca College and State Parks -- work on varied and splintered projects.

Jon’s take home message is that streams need to be treated as infrastructure. Streams interact with other infrastructure and we need to allow space for streams. Pre-disaster maintenance is a lot cheaper than post-

disaster fixes. And putting back what failed without accounting for stream dynamics is a waste of time and money.

In the discussion period, Jon said Upper Susquehanna Coalition wants to create a “Stream Team” monitoring group. SWCDs are members of USC. SWCDs in Delaware and Green counties get some funding from the New York City watershed, which has money because it is a drinking water provider. Kathy Wilsea commented that the east side of the scoured area by South Street Extension was in the same condition as the west side, which is eroding very near the road now and was part of Jon’s slide show. Frank said this area is very close to bedrock, and suggested looking over old studies of the area and obtaining bedrock measures from USGS. Todd Miller acknowledged areas downstream on Taughannock Creek are down to bedrock. Frank said we need to return to comprehensive work with the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program and stop hopping all over the place. He suggested Streams or Executive committees look at the overall mitigation plan. Craig Schutt said Jon has put together a proposal of what a “Stream Team” might look like in Tompkins County.

Hydrilla Task Force – Roxy Johnston reported the most recent good news is GLRI funds of \$380,000 have been secured and the contract is signed. This will provide for herbicide treatment and follow-up testing. Unfortunately, it was learned at a meeting with DEC that the State budget of \$375,00 is for invasives statewide. DEC doesn’t have the power to dispense those funds without direction, so is looking to the State Legislature for specifics. DEC anticipates approval of that money for Hydrilla in Cayuga Inlet, and is moving forward with planning phase, but Roxy doesn’t expect to be able to access those funds until the end of the year. But it would be used to reimburse costs incurred since April 1, 2012, so monitoring costs would be covered. If Hydrilla is found in Cayuga Lake, we will need front money for divers and weed barriers.

Endothall herbicide application is anticipated for 6/26, with the contractor asking for a 2-day window. Official public notice goes out 1-2 days before. Tomorrow night there will be a public meeting on Hydrilla at Ithaca Youth Bureau, sponsored by CCE, Hydrilla Task Force and WRC. Frank asked what can be done to help release DEC funding. Roxy said staff members for Nozolio, Seward and O’Mara are working with the DEC budget staff. Of the \$800,000 amount that has been tossed about, \$775,000 would come from that direction and \$25,000 from Aid to Localities (which is more easily accessed). SWCD can accept the \$25,000 and Roxy will let them know if there are any barriers. Funding specifics:

- \$ 380,000 GLRI federal money through FLOWPA to SWCD (contract signed)
- 775,000 NYS Conservation Fund
- 25,000 Aid to Localities
- 60,000 State Parks
- 50,000 Office of Invasive Species if needed for divers, benthic mats
- 29,000 for plant monitoring, probably contracted directly to Bob Johnson

The Floating Classroom is in the worst situation, as they have been unable to secure funds for monitoring trips. Cayuga Lake Watershed Network is in the second worst situation, as they do not have adequate funding for identification workshops throughout the watershed. Bob Johnson is operating on a shoestring, too. Roxy expects we will need to respond to RFPs to obtain 2013 funding. She pointed out there are 1,900 monitoring points, and the Floating Classroom costs are \$850/trip plus lab costs. Permit applications for Fluridone are at DEC and notification letters to property owners have been mailed. That second-phase herbicide is planned for mid-July. Frank said the local law on aquatic invasive species is on the County Legislature agenda for tomorrow (6/19) and Sharon Anderson asked to be informed if it passes, as she would like to announce it at the public meeting.

Committees – Grants: Craig said work plans passed DEC so FLOWPA funds will be released. **Streams:** Roxy announced the Cayuga Inlet gage got moved to the fish ladder, and extended thanks to USGS and DEC. **Water Quality Strategy:** Bill George said they are working on scheduling a meeting. **Wetlands:** Darby Kiley spoke at TCCOG to a pretty full house. **Aquifer:** Todd Miller said they met and continued

work on their fact sheet. He will do a presentation at the Town of Lansing to try to interest them in pursuing an aquifer study. Executive: Frank said the Ithaca Journal published a Guest Viewpoint letter that stated the writer's opinion that herbicides should not be used on Hydrilla and included some inaccuracies. A response has been drafted by Roxy and the Task Force, then circulated to the Executive Committee. Frank will be wrapping that up so it can be sent to the Ithaca Journal.

Chair and Staff Reports – Frank announced the Planning Department has a public meeting tonight in Varna on conservation initiatives. Kathy Wilsea said it is at 6:30, and meetings on the same topics will take place Tuesday at PRI and Wednesday at the public library. Frank pointed out there was an article in today's Ithaca Journal on the low risk of earthquakes from gas drilling. The August WRC meeting was canceled by consensus. The September WRC meeting was moved from 9/17 to 9/24 by consensus. Notes on the topic of regional efforts to monitor streams, from Tom Evans of Southern Tier East Regional Planning & Development Board, were distributed. Kathy said members were welcome to extra copies of documents that were on the table.

Announcements/Other Business – Bill said Discover Magazine's *Top 100 stories of 2011* listed gas hydrofracturing as #21. Guest Amy Risen said she was present today to open conversation about the proposed trash transfer station in Newfield. This project is proposed in her neighborhood, and the business owner expects about 20 trucks per day to dump trash, which will be sorted and redirected. This is a quiet community, many residents farm for their own food, and is near Robert Treman State Park. The neighbors feel it is an awful idea for all, and also have concerns about their drinking water that comes from shallow wells. They have asked the business owner's engineers if they are familiar with this type of business, and the response is "not really". So the neighbors are looking into what they can do. They seek support, and have been verbal in opposing the DEC permit that this business would need. Because this type of business needs a water capture system, a cement tank would be used and that raises quantity issues, too. It is unknown at this point if the station would also process solids from gas drilling. Amy said DEC is not sure if an Environmental Impact Statement will be needed. John Andersson pointed out that decision will be made when DEC reviews the Environmental Assessment Form. Amy said this facility is already being constructed, as the owner doesn't think he will be stopped. Roxy suggested CSI for baseline water testing. Todd suggested WRC members would help review the EAF/EIS. Amy can be reached at amyjoyrise@gmail.com

Adjournment -- The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department.

Adopted by the Council on July 16, 2012.